

it is said that Davoust communicated the plan to Fouché. Considering Davoust's character this is very unlikely, but if so, it is far from improbable that Fouché communicated the plan to the Allies, with whom, and more particularly with Prince Metternich, he is well known to have been corresponding at the time.

Shortly after the Emperor's arrival in Paris Benjamin Constant, a moderate and candid man, was deputed by the constitutional party to ascertain Napoleon's sentiments and intentions.¹ Constant was a lover of constitutional liberty, and an old opponent of Napoleon, whose headlong career of despotism, cut out by the sword, he had vainly endeavored to check by the eloquence of his pen.

The interview took place at the Tuileries. The Emperor, as was his wont, began the conversation, and kept it nearly all to himself during the rest of the audience. He did not affect to disguise either his past actions or present dispositions.

"The nation," he said, "has had a respite of twelve years from every kind of political agitation, and for one year has enjoyed a respite from war. This double repose has created

¹ The feelings which drew such men as Carnot and Benjamin Constant to the side of Napoleon on his return from Elba were very mixed. If liberty seemed safer from the flight of the Bourbons, it was alike menaced by the return of the man who had crushed the Revolution and by the arming of the Allies. As Madame de Staël exclaimed, "Liberty is lost if Bonaparte triumphs, and the national independence if he be defeated." Carnot, the former "Organizer of Victory" under the Republic, forgiving Napoleon's former dismissal of him from the War Ministry, now came forward to serve the man who had ruined the Republican dreams of freedom but whose cause he now regarded as bound up with that of France, and he stood by Napoleon to the end. Benjamin Constant perhaps hoped that if a free constitution could be established it might save France from the attacks of the sovereigns who professed to war only against the tyranny of Napoleon, or that, if the Emperor fell, the constitution might for very shame's sake be preserved by the Allies or by the Bourbons: he therefore undertook the task of trying to get Napoleon to consent to doctrines which had always been abhorrent to him. As for Napoleon himself, one cannot help sympathizing in the exclamation wrung from him, "Peace obtained on the single base of our independence, when there is no longer any question except that of administering our beautiful Empire of France, I shall not really be humiliated by hearing her representatives oppose me with objections and even with refusals. After having dominated and conquered the world there is nothing so very disagreeable in being contradicted that I cannot submit to it. In any case my son shall do so, and I will seek to prepare him for it by my lessons and by my example. All that I ask from God and the nation is to let me conquer, but once more conquer, these monarchs formerly so humble and now so arrogant" (*Thiers*, tome xix. livrc lviii. p. 412).